

# Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

## Getting a Multifamily or Commercial Construction Permit from DPD

September 1, 2006

This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) is designed to help you through the construction permit process when you want to construct a new multifamily or commercial building, or when you want to add an addition to an existing multifamily or commercial building. It provides general information on how to apply for your construction permit, what resources and assistance are available at DPD and other City departments, how long the process is likely to take, how to track permit status, how the permit is issued, and how and when inspections are initiated.

For the purposes of this CAM, a multifamily building is a building that contains more than two residential dwelling units, such as townhouses or apartment buildings, but does not contain any commercial tenants, such as retail or office spaces.

Any building that contains commercial tenants is considered a commercial building. Mixed use buildings with both residential and commercial uses will also be treated as commercial buildings.

### CONSTRUCTION PERMITS

New construction and most alterations of multifamily and commercial buildings will require plan review as part of the construction permit approval process. If your project is minor in nature, please refer to CAM 316, *Subject-to-Field-Inspection Permits*, to determine whether your project qualifies for a Subject-to-Field-Inspection (STFI) Permit.

### Applying for a Construction permit

DPD's goal is to provide you with assistance in advance of your application submittal, so that the application materials are complete and accurate, reducing the need for correction cycles that will delay approval.

### Step 1. Coaching

Coaching is not required, but is available for all applicants to ensure unique or particular issues are identified with your proposed project. It is important to receive coaching first from a land use planner to determine what is allowed on your property, what development standards apply, whether your project will require a land use permit, and what the permit process will entail. During coaching, you can explain your project to a DPD planner, who will then help you identify whether any land use permits will be required for your project. The number of dwelling units, the total square footage of the proposed building(s), the amount of parking, and the zoning of the property are primary factors in determining whether SEPA review, shoreline review, design review, and other discretionary reviews will be required for your project. Except for unit lot subdivision permits, most land use permit approvals must be obtained before a construction permit can be approved for your project.

It is important to find out early whether your project will need a land use permit, as this will affect the timing of the overall permitting process. In general, land use permits can take 4-8 months to review, sometimes longer depending on the project complexity.

Related information to assist you in determining whether your project requires a land use permit are:

- CAM 208, *When Environmental Review is required in Seattle*
- CAM 209, *Master Use permit Application Requirements for Shoreline Permits*
- CAM 210, *Master Use permit requirements for Variances*

[www.seattle.gov/dpd](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd)



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Department of Planning & Development

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- CAM 211A, *Master Use Permit Requirements for Administrative Conditional Use (in Single Family and Multifamily Zones)*
- CAM 211B, *Master Use Permit Requirements for Administrative Conditional Use (in Residential Commercial and Commercial Zones)*
- CAM 238, *Design Review: General information, application Instructions and submittal requirements*
- CAM 242, *Tree Protection Regulations in Seattle*
- CAM 327, *Environmentally Critical Areas Exemptions and Modifications to Submittal Requirements*
- CAM 331, *Environmentally Critical Areas--Tree and Vegetation Removal Permits*

Once you have talked to a land use planner, we recommend that you sign up to speak to a permit specialist or permit leader for further information about the construction permit process. DPD staff can identify the specific code and application requirements for your project, as well as outline the permit process and estimate the permit fees.

In order to address all issues, questions and concerns, you may need more than one coaching visit.

No appointment or fee is necessary for coaching, which is available to the public in the DPD Applicant Services Center (ASC) on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower during ASC hours of operation (see page 5). The busiest times for coaching are between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., when wait times often exceed 1 hour.

Pre-submittal conferences are another form of coaching that are available by appointment only. Because of limited staff resources, these conferences are intended to serve the applicant who has already gone through coaching, and has follow-up questions about interpreting complex code or technical requirements. Requests for Pre-submittal conferences are screened to ensure that the issues to be discussed are beyond general questions that can be answered through the coaching process.

### **Pre-submittal Conferences**

Pre-submittal conferences, both land use and construction, with a land use planner are required for multifamily or commercial projects that trigger the design review process (see CAM 238, *Design Review: General Information, Application Instructions, and Submittal Requirements*). Pre-submittal conferences

are also **required** for highrise structures and buildings that include an atrium (see CAM 318, *Building Code Pre-design/Code Interpretation Conferences*). Information on how to schedule a pre-submittal conference can be obtained during coaching in the ASC.

### **Step 2. Research & Prepare a Preliminary Site Plan for Your Proposed Project.**

The preliminary site plan should be prepared according to the standards outlined in CAMs 103, *Site Plan Requirements* and 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines*, and should convey where your structure(s) will be located, the amount of other impervious surfaces, the general topography of your site, and the existing level of street and alley improvements in the right-of-ways abutting your site.

Two copies of the preliminary site plan will be needed for Step 3.

### **Step 3. Submit a DPD Preliminary Application Package to the Applicant Services Center**

Once you know for sure that you will build a multifamily or commercial project on a site in Seattle, you should submit a DPD Preliminary Application package. A separate package is required for any required land use permits, in addition to the construction permit.

The forms for the DPD Preliminary Application package can be obtained during coaching or on our website at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/Forms](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Forms), and includes the following:

- DPD Preliminary Application form
- 2 copies of the preliminary site plan, meeting the standards of CAMs 103 & 103A, as prepared in Step 2.

The Preliminary Permit Application package does not constitute a permit application, but informs City departments that you intend to apply for a permit in the near future. The DPD permit application packet can be dropped off at the ASC counter, **faxed to (206) 233-7866**, or mailed to the DPD Applicant Services Center at 700 Fifth Ave., P.O. Box 34019, Seattle, WA 98124-4019.

The forms request owner and applicant information, a project description and project characteristics, and property related information from you, including the legal description and the King County Assessor's Parcel

Number (APN). After screening the preliminary application for completeness, DPD staff will provide a project number with this information which will be used in tracking the project throughout the permitting process.

DPD will conduct a site visit when the project involves ground disturbance. For new construction projects, this information will be shared with other City departments so that DPD and other City departments have the opportunity to inform you of important requirements. For example, required right-of-way and utility improvements or whether the site is in an Environmentally Critical Area. It will take approximately 2-3 weeks for City requirements to be identified.

DPD will mail, email or fax the requirements to the applicant. For this reason, we strongly recommend that you submit the Preliminary Permit Application package a minimum of 8 weeks prior to your desired date for project submittal. Submitting this application form early will provide the time necessary to incorporate any requirements identified by City departments into your project design prior to submittal.

#### Step 4. Prepare detailed plans for submittal

The City requirements that are sent to the applicant in Step 3 should be incorporated into the project design and plan documentation, and the detailed plans for the proposed development should be finalized.

#### Plan Requirements

- Each plan set should include the items on the appropriate screening checklist. These checklists can be found at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications/Forms](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications/Forms). Usually, the plan set includes a DPD coversheet; a site plan; floor, roof, and foundation/basement plans; elevation drawings; and all related structural plans and details. Also include landscaping plans, grading or drainage plans, and street and alley improvement plans.
- Detailed information about the specific information required on the plan sheets is outlined in the screening standard documents for multifamily and commercial projects. These documents are available online at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications/Forms](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications/Forms) or can be obtained during a coaching visit in the ASC.
- A minimum of four full plan sets will be required, and up to nine full sets may be required, depending on the project scope and the number of distinct

reviews involved. During coaching sessions, DPD staff will specify, on a project-specific basis, the number of plan sets required.

#### Using Professional Designers and Licensed Engineers

DPD requires using a professional designer or licensed engineer to prepare the plan documentation for multifamily and commercial projects for any project with a value of \$30,000 or more. Well-prepared plans have a much higher chance of being efficiently reviewed. DPD staff cannot recommend designers and builders, but suggest consulting the Yellow Pages and design and construction associations for information about their services.

#### Additional Application Forms

Forms can be picked up at the Applicant Services Center (ASC), and most are available online. For plan review projects your plan sets with supporting documents and the DPD coversheets constitute your application.

- DPD coversheet – plan size 24" x 36", requires owner and project information. Coversheets must be attached to each set of plans.
- Financial responsibility form – required in order to identify who will be held responsible for the permitting project fees and costs.
- Contractor disclosure form – required for all construction projects with a value of more than \$5,000, and requires information under Washington state law that must be posted at the job site (e.g., owner, prime contractor, lending institution, etc.).
- Temporary erosion and sedimentation control (TESC) standard plan (formerly called the construction stormwater control checklist) – usually required for projects causing site disturbance of less than 5,000 square feet of new or replaced impervious surface. The issues addressed by the TESC plan include soil stabilization over winter months, sediment retention on-site, prevention of pollution, and construction vehicle access.
- Equipment sizing form – deals with Energy Code requirements, and is needed if your project contains over 500 square feet of new heated space.
- Target UA calculation form – required if you are not using the Prescriptive Energy Code compliance standards.

## Step 5. Screening

Screening is an option that is recommended prior to submitting your application, unless you are on the DPD list of consistently prepared applicants (CPA). This review is to verify the completeness of the plans, forms and other documents prior to submittal. Steps 3 and 4 above must be completed prior to screening. Screening is provided in the ASC on a walk-in basis: expect some wait time as there is often a line for these services. No appointment or fee is required for this review.

## Step 6. Submit your Street Improvement Engineering Plans to Seattle Department of Transportation

For multifamily and commercial projects that require street or alley improvements, the right-of-way (ROW) plans will need to be submitted to Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and accepted for review, prior to submitting your construction permit plans to DPD. Construction permit applications for new buildings will not be accepted by DPD until SDOT plan submittal has occurred. SDOT notifies DPD electronically with the date on which the plans are accepted for review, which must be prior to the construction permit intake appointment.

## Step 7. Schedule an Intake Appointment

Applications submittal is by appointment. Intake appointment wait times vary seasonally, from three working days to several weeks. Visit the ASC or call (206) 684-8850 to make an appointment.

A minimum of 75% of the permit fee is paid at intake. Permit fees are established by the Seattle Permit Fee Subtitle available from the PRC, (206) 684-8467, or on DPD's fees page at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/fees](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/fees).

## PERMIT REVIEWS AND ESTIMATED TURNAROUND TIMES

For multifamily and commercial plan review projects, zoning and building code reviews are always required. Depending on the specific proposal, additional reviews could include: energy/mechanical, geotechnical, shoring, ECA, grading/drainage, health, and fire.

## Initial Review

Turnaround times for initial plan reviews vary throughout the year. The following estimates are useful as general guides only. **During heavy volume, these time frames can double; please plan your projects accordingly:**

- Minor additions or alterations to multifamily or commercial buildings: 48 hrs
- Complex addition/alteration review: 4-6 weeks
- Standard plans – initial review of standard plan projects: 4-6 weeks
- Standard plans – subsequent submittals: 1 week
- New multifamily or commercial buildings: 6-8 weeks

## Correction Review

It is common for reviewers to identify corrections on multifamily or commercial projects. Many “corrections,” however, are actually requests for more information—another good reason for taking advantage of the ASC's coaching services.

Correction notices are sent by mail, with the reviewer's name and phone number. Contact your reviewer directly if you have questions about the requested corrections. DPD will notify you when all sets are available for correction. Plans needing correction can be either mailed directly to you or picked up at the Plan Library, located on the 21st floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., (206) 684-8169.

Once the applicant makes the corrections requested and revised plans have been submitted back to the Plan Library at DPD, it will usually take 2-3 weeks for staff to re-review the project. Multifamily or commercial projects often have more than one round of corrections from reviewers. \*To keep your project on time, it's advisable to plan for more than one round of reviews when creating a schedule for your project.

## Tracking Your Permit during Review

You can get information about your permit as it is being processed by accessing DPD's online Permit Desk at [www.seattle.gov/dpd/Permits](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Permits) or by contacting the Plan Library at (206) 684-8169.



## PERMIT ISSUANCE

Once all review approvals have occurred for a project, the plans and documentation will be gathered together, checked to ensure consistency among plan sets and final fees will be calculated. This process can take several days, depending on the project complexity. You will be notified by phone or mail when your plans are ready for issuance, including any remaining fees that must be paid at issuance.

After notification, approved plans are issued at the Plans Routing desk in the ASC, and can be picked up on a walk-in basis during normal ASC business hours. However, the process of retrieving an issued permit can take an hour or more, so DPD recommends arriving at least an hour prior to close of business to ensure the process can be completed on a single business day.

## INSPECTIONS

The required inspections for a project are identified on the back of the issued construction permit. To request a building inspection for construction permit, call the 24-hour Inspection Request Line at (206) 684-8950.

Same-day inspections are provided for requests made by 7 a.m. If you have questions for your inspector call (206) 684-8950.

## GENERAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The Public Resource Center (PRC) is DPD's general information center, and provides information documents, codes, and access to current Master Use Permit files. The PRC is also the home of the Microfilm Library, where property plan and permit history may be available for your property.

The Applicant Services Center (ASC) provides application assistance and intake for all applications to DPD, including land use permits, construction permits and associated permits such as electrical, furnace, boiler and sign permits. The ASC includes the Drainage and Site Development desks as well as an SDOT representative available for questions (SDOT SCHEDULE HERE). ASC staff also review Subject-to-Field-Inspection (STFI) and 48-hour permits.

The PRC and ASC are located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower:

DPD Applicant Services Center  
700 Fifth Avenue, Suite 2000  
P.O. Box 34019  
Seattle, WA 98124-34019

Normal business hours are:  
Mon/Wed/Fri 7:30am - 5:30pm  
Tues/Thurs 10:30am - 5:30pm

- ASC main phone number: (206) 684-8850
- PRC main phone number: (206) 684-8467
- DPD Online: [www.seattle.gov/dpd](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd)

### Contact information for other City Departments:

- Seattle Department of Transportation  
700 5th Ave., Suite 3900  
P.O. Box 34996  
Seattle, WA 98124-4996  
(206) 684-ROAD (7623)
- Seattle Public Utilities  
700 Fifth Ave., Suite 4900  
P.O. Box 34018  
Seattle, WA 98124-4018  
(206) 684-3000
- Seattle City Light  
700 5th Ave., Suite 3300  
P.O. Box 34023  
Seattle, WA 98104-5031  
(206) 684-3000
- Seattle Department of Neighborhoods  
(historic districts, landmark structures)  
700 5th Ave., Suite 1700  
P.O. Box 94649  
Seattle, WA 98124-4649  
(206) 684-0464

### Codes to Help with Multifamily and Commercial Applications

The Public Resource Center (PRC) sells copies of all codes DPD administers. Find most of the codes online at: [www.seattle.gov/dpd/Codes](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Codes).

- Seattle Land Use Code (Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Ch. 23)
- Seattle Building Code (2003 International Building Code and Seattle amendments)

- Seattle Residential Code (2003 International Residential Code) for townhouses not more than three stories in height.
- Seattle Energy Code (Seattle supplement to Washington Administrative Code Ch. 51-11)
- Washington State Ventilation and Indoor Quality Code (WAC 51-13)
- Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control (SGDC) Ordinance (SMC Ch. 22.800-22.808)
- Environmentally Critical Areas (ECA) Ordinance (SMC Ch. 25.09)

## CLIENT ASSISTANCE MEMOS (CAMs) TO HELP WITH MULTIFAMILY AND COMMERCIAL APPLICATIONS

### Plan Standards

- CAM 103, *Site Plan Requirements* – describes and illustrates the information required on plot plans; sources of further information are also provided. The purpose of a plot plan is to show, to scale, property lines, the location and dimensions of all existing structures, and the location of the proposed work.
- CAM 103A, *Site Plan Guidelines* – provides tips on how to prepare a plot plan.
- CAM 106, *General Standards for Plans and Drawings* – provides drawing standards, including quality, scale and size.
- CAM 303, *Applicant Responsibilities and Plan Requirements for Single Family and Two-Unit Dwelling Units* – explains types of information you may be required to supply, especially for single family and two-unit dwelling units. Included are sample drawings of a plot plan, elevation, roof and floor framing, and a section.

### Code and General Information

- CAMs 116 and 117 – provide information about permits for accessory dwelling units.
- CAM 120, *Getting a Certificate of Occupancy*
- CAM 208, *When Environmental Review is required in Seattle*
- CAM 222, *Providing Open Space for Ground-Related Housing*
- CAMs 230 and 231, *Multifamily Residential Off-street parking requirements*
- CAM 234, *Landscaping Information*

- CAM 238, *Design Review: General Information, Application Instructions and Submittal Requirements*
- CAM 241, *Calculating Required Parking for Commercial Projects*
- CAM 242, *Tree Protection Regulations in Seattle*
- CAM 313, *Required Pre-Design Conferences for High-rise Structures and Buildings with an Atrium*
- CAM 314, *Seattle Building Code Requirements for Existing buildings that Undergo Substantial Alterations*
- CAM 337, *Demolition Permits*

## Related Permitting Information from Other City Departments

### Seattle Public Utilities

- CAM 1101, *Drainage and Wastewater: Regulation of Development*
- CAM 1201, *Water availability Certificate*
- CAM 1202, *Water Service Application*
- CAM 1301, *Solid Waste: Information for Developers*

### Seattle Department of Neighborhoods

- CAM 3000, *Historic Preservation and SEPA Review*

The CAMs listed here can be obtained in person at the PRC, by mail, or on our website at **[www.seattle.gov/dpd/CAMs](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/CAMs)**. The DPD publications website, **[www.seattle.gov/dpd/Publications](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Publications)**, includes a complete listing of publications available to assist you in the permitting process.

## Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)**, **Director's Rules**, and the **Seattle Municipal Code** are available on the "Publications" and "Codes" pages of our website at **[www.seattle.gov/dpd](http://www.seattle.gov/dpd)**. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this CAM, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.